

Beijing and asking if the Communist authorities are cooperating with U.S. efforts to protect our athletes.

If the safety, security, and privacy of our athletes cannot be guaranteed, the United States should, and indeed must, adopt a total and complete boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

No American should be put in harm's way for the sake of a sporting event. President Biden ought to make these terms absolutely clear to Communists in Beijing, and we should not compromise on them.

The athletes we send to the Olympics are not Democrats or Republicans. They do not wear donkeys or elephants on their uniform. They have no party insignia. They are Americans, wearing the Stars and Stripes, bearing the standard of our great Nation. It is the responsibility of our government to protect these champions, and I hope this is an area in which our divided government can unite.

#### FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, the Democrats want to call their voting bill the For the People Act, but I would suggest you not be fooled by the marketing. This bill has nothing to offer the people of our country. The so-called For the People Act is, in fact, a partisan takeover of our elections that seeks a government of the Democrats, by the Democrats, and for the Democrats. So it is no wonder that it is their very top priority and it is literally the first bill filed in both the House and the Senate this year.

If this bill passes, it will shatter our Nation's faith in the fairness of our democracy, weaken the security of our elections, and attempt to entrench Democratic rule in the swamp, unchallenged, for decades to come.

S. 1 is a Federal takeover of our elections that would usurp the constitutional prerogative of the States in determining what the Constitution calls the "Times, Places, and Manners of holding elections." While our Constitution has always given Congress the power to determine certain aspects of how elections are conducted, the Founders envisioned that this power would be exercised, in the words of Alexander Hamilton, only under "extraordinary circumstances" and only as "the last resort." For example, Congress could intervene if States were simply refusing to hold Federal elections in an attempt to deprive Congress of the Members needed to operate under the quorum rules of the Constitution. Of course, we face no such extraordinary circumstances today.

No matter the outrageous claims of hysterical journalists and politicians, almost every story you hear and every Democratic claim you hear about State election law reforms misrepresents those reforms or doesn't put them in proper context.

The Democratic Party—the very head of the Democratic Party, Presi-

dent Joe Biden, referred to Georgia's election reform, for instance, as a "new Jim Crow," even though it has far, far more access to the ballot than Democratic-run States like New York and, yes, Joe Biden's own Delaware.

I might also note that Kentucky passed a fairly sweeping election reform bill earlier this year. It still doesn't go as far as Georgia's bill did in providing early access to the ballot. Yet there is no condemnation of Kentucky's bill. I wonder why. Could it be because Kentucky has a Democratic Governor?

The Democrats want to use these kinds of misrepresentations to pass S. 1, which would give all power over our Nation's elections to Democrats in Congress, who think anyone should be able to vote, at any time, at any place, and in any manner, with remarkably little concern even for the basics of election integrity, such as establishing the identity and the legality of individuals who are casting the ballots.

The bill before the Senate would invalidate voter identification laws in States across the country—laws that simply require individuals to present valid photo identification in order to vote. Now, Democrats like to pretend that voter ID laws are racist, just as they like to pretend that anyone who opposes them is also racist. That would be a surprise to most of the American people, though. According to recent polling, three-quarters of Americans support photo ID requirements, including 70 percent of Black voters, who support photo ID requirements. That is a pretty big claim of false consciousness by the Democrats.

After all, it is no great burden to present a driver's license or photo identification at the polling place in order to vote. It is not some devious tactic to suppress any group of voters. If it was, maybe we would need to ask some of these politically correct airlines, like Delta, why they require passengers to present photo identification before boarding flights. Are they engaged in some nefarious, racist practice of traveler suppression? I don't think so.

I think voter ID laws are a basic means of securing the vote, just like three-quarters of all Americans think. Yet S. 1 would still eliminate them all, allowing anyone to register to vote, under any identity, without presenting proof that they are who they claim to be.

The Democrats' bill would also make permanent many of the vote-by-mail expansions that were rushed through as ill-considered emergency measures during the pandemic last year. The free-for-all of ballot harvesting and mail-in voting during the 2020 elections caused many Americans to doubt the integrity of that vote.

Removing guardrails against fraud will only convince more voters that the electoral process is rigged. Responsible elected officials should be trying to assuage voters' fears by implementing adequate safeguards on our elections.

After all, many of these practices were unheard of before the 2020 election.

Now, the Democrats like to say that they have to pass S. 1 in a response to these State election reforms, but I would point out that this bill was introduced in the House 2 years ago, before the States passed any of the election reforms. Oftentimes these State election reforms are being passed by legislatures that were appalled by their Governor's sweeping power grabs. So no matter what the conditions, the Democrats think it is always time to nationalize our elections.

Another provision of the Democrats' election bill would repeal donor privacy laws that keep the IRS from harassing nonprofit organizations about the identities and addresses of their donors. Democrats claim that this change is about dark-money mega donors, but it would apply to any middle-class family who donates a few hundred dollars a year to a cause they care about, like a church or a charity. Yet, if the Democrats have their way, bureaucrats at the IRS would be able to force nonprofits to name their donors or risk losing their tax-exempt status. This should alarm anyone familiar with the IRS's track record of unfairly targeting conservative groups. After all, just last week, we saw a conveniently timed leak of legally protected tax returns that came out right before the Senate Finance Committee had a meeting to justify higher taxes. What a coincidence.

Now, these are just a few of the proposals in the Democrats' election bill. I haven't even talked about the public funding of campaigns. I haven't mentioned transforming the Federal Election Commission into a partisan weapon to be used by the President's party against the opposition. All of these provisions and many more encourage fraud, harassment, and corruption in our campaigns and elections. Not coincidentally, they all seem to work to the advantage of the Democrats or at least to the Democrats' perceived self-advantage. It is little surprise, then, that this partisan bill is supported only by Democrats—not even all Democrats, for that matter, not all the Democrats here in the Senate and not all the Democrats in the House, which passed it earlier this year by the thinnest of margins.

So I am proud to be a part of the bipartisan majority in the Senate that is opposing the Democratic Party's attempted takeover of our States' election processes. Political office in America is not a birthright of any party or any politician, so the Democrats should try winning their elections fair and square instead of taking them over in a centralizing power play.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—  
EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 151, 152, 153, and 154; that those nominations be confirmed en bloc; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object, and I rise to object to this unanimous consent request.

The VA, for years, has made promises that they have year after year failed to meet. For years, veterans and their family members have called my office, whether I was in the State senate or over in the House or here in the Senate. They are distressed by the lack of service they receive from the VA. My caseworkers would work tirelessly with these constituents, only to end up frustrated by a very unresponsive VA. This is unacceptable. It has become the culture of the VA, and this is something that has to change.

Now, for weeks, the committee has been asking for feedback on legislative proposals which have the potential to affect the workflow and the capacity of the VA. The VA has been silent on this even though we have asked for their views and have asked them to weigh in. The reason we have asked them for this is the VA has a backlog of over 180,000 cases. Their wait times this year have continued to escalate. They are not going down.

So, yesterday, I had a call with Secretary McDonough expressing my concerns with the lack of feedback that the committee has received on what is shaping up to be the most consequential legislative effort in the veterans space in an entire generation. The formal response that I received today was incomplete, but it contained a promise that they would have more fulsome feedback by July 30.

I will continue to keep my hold on these pending VA nominees until I receive the official views on the COST of War Act, on the toxic exposures bills. We owe our veterans. We owe it to them to get this right. Therefore, I object to the unanimous consent request, and I will continue my hold on these nominees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Montana is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—  
CALENDAR NO. 153

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I will rephrase this one more time.

I would ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 153—for those who want to know, that is Matthew T. Quinn of Montana; that the nomination be confirmed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any other nomination; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. TESTER. Last month, four well-qualified, noncontroversial nominees were unanimously voted out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee—unanimously voted out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which Senator BLACKBURN sits on. Here is who these people are:

Don Remy, a veteran, has been nominated as VA Deputy Secretary—VA Deputy Secretary. That is second in command. If Senator BLACKBURN wants quick reaction from the VA on toxic exposure, maybe Senator BLACKBURN shouldn't hold that nominee of the No. 2 position of the Department, a nominee specifically tasked with coordinating VA's work with the Defense Department, which includes issues like—guess what—toxic exposure. But that is all right. We will leave him sitting at home. We will leave the veterans out in the cold.

Then there is Patricia Ross, who is nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs. So if Senator BLACKBURN wants more information from the VA on legislation and how much it costs, maybe the Senator shouldn't hold the nominee tasked with getting that information from the VA to Congress, but she is.

Then, there is Maryanne Donaghy, nominated as Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection. I want to tell you that whistleblowers regularly come to us with reports of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Folks love to condemn the VA—we've heard a lot about it a second ago—when it fails to hold its workforce accountable. I recommend that, if Senator BLACKBURN wants to request accountability at the VA, maybe the Senator shouldn't hold the nominee tasked with employee accountability and whistleblower protection.

Then, there is Matt Quinn—someone that I know very, very well because he comes from the State of Montana—for director of cemetery affairs. So when people die, no one is there in the VA to take care of this issue.

Once again, all four people—critically important people—whom the Senator voted for to get out of committee are now being held by the Senator.

I am going to tell you that, if we want to hold the VA accountable today in a situation where we are coming out of a pandemic, this is not the way to do it. The bottom line is that if you want a VA that can function, then, we have to have that VA staffed up.

Don't talk to me or anybody else in this body about distressed veterans and then say: You know what. We are going to stop the No. 2. We are going to stop the VA person who is supposed to talk to us. We are going to stop the cemetery person. We will stop the whistleblower person. That is really helping veterans.

Quite frankly, it is just the contrary.

I pride myself on running a committee that is very bipartisan, and the VA Committee may be the best, not because of me but because of people like JERRY MORAN, JOHN BOOZMAN, people like PATTY MURRAY. Those people step up to the plate every day, and they do what is right for veterans.

Let's talk about the toxic exposure bill. Let's talk about that bill. In World War I, we had mustard gas. The VA had no capacity to deal with those veterans. In World War II, we had radiation. The VA had no capacity. In the Vietnam war, we had Agent Orange. And, by the way, they died, they died, and they died again because this body refuses to give the VA the tools they need to take care of our veterans, and now we are doing the same thing with burn pits.

I am here to tell you that I had a veteran stand up in my very first year on the VA Committee. A Vietnam veteran stood up in the back of the room in a townhall and said: You are not going to treat this generation of veterans like you treated ours, the Vietnam veterans.

Well, I tell you what: If we want to close the door and we want to delay and we want to push back what is going on with burn pits, then, let's have them die.

You were at the hearing that the lung transplant guy was at. We had to juggle that hearing so he could even be at it because he was on medication.

The bottom line is people are dying every day.

By the way, we are still not done with Agent Orange, hypertension, and MGUS, which are in this bill. They will die. Some more of them will die.

We send our young people off to war. They come back changed, and we don't have the guts to step up and debate the bill. When I give the ranking member the authority to stop that bill from coming to the floor, we are still going to make excuses? Give me a break.

I am going to tell you what. I have been in this body for probably too long. We turn around and we try to do the right things, and we have people who say: You know, send our young people off to war at the drop of the hat. Send them off to war. Send them off to war.